

PRESS RELEASE

Congressman John Conyers, Jr.

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Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary
Dean, Congressional Black Caucus

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CONYERS DECRIES STATE OF COMPETITION IN COLLEGE ATHLETICS

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congressman John Conyers, Jr., Ranking Member, House Judiciary Committee, issued the following statement regarding today’s Judiciary Committee Hearing on “Competition in College Athletic Conferences and Antitrust Aspects of the Bowl Championship Series,” which was held at his request:

“There can be little doubt that college athletics in general, and college football in particular, have become far more about money, and far less about education, than many of us would care to admit. It seems like every day we learn that one of our major educational institutions has become embroiled in scandal. The University of Michigan, Ohio State, the University of Georgia, and of course, Baylor University, as well as scores of other state and private institutions have had their judgment and ethics called into question.

Into this unseemly mix, comes the Bowl Championship Series, which, on an outward level at least, displays many of the characteristics of a cartel. The six most important football conferences schools have entered into an agreement with each other and the most important four bowls, which results in their members receiving the vast majority of the proceeds from the big bowl games. For example, in the 2002-2003 season, only \$5 million of a total BCS revenue of \$109 million went to non-BCS colleges.

My concern is not merely academic or based on a rooting interest for a particular institution. The potential impact of this conglomeration of money and power can have a cascading impact far beyond major college football. The de facto exclusion of non-BCS schools from major bowl games may well be causing those schools to have lower athletic budgets, inferior athletic facilities, and rising deficits. I am also concerned that the disparities created in allocating sports revenues can have a significant, negative impact on Title IX opportunities for women in college athletics.”

At the hearing, Rep. Conyers raised specific concerns about the treatment of historically black colleges under the BCS regime and the fact that out of 117 Division 1A schools only four of those schools employ African American coaches: “Black colleges like Grambling, Mississippi State and Florida A & M, have sent scores of players to the pros, and have been led by legendary coaches like Eddie Robison and Doug Williams. Yet Florida A & M, which has recently been admitted into Division 1A, is already being treated unfairly, with little chance of entering into a lucrative television deal or receiving their share of bowl championship series money, let alone getting into a major bowl. Without access to these funds or bowls, historically black colleges can’t build the facilities needed to succeed at the next level.”

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